Customs Modernization

October/November 2002 Status Update for Oversight Agencies

Modernization at-a-Glance

Timeline

Oct. 8-10: Trade Support Network meeting, Hyatt Fair Lakes, Fairfax, VA

Oct. 23: National Association of Foreign Trade Zones 30th Annual Conference, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Oct. 25: Western Cargo Conference (WESCCON), Las Vegas, NV

Oct. 29: Government Support Network meeting, Washington D.C.

Nov. 6: Joint Industry Group, Washington D.C.

Nov. 21: Customs 3rd Annual Trade Symposium, Ronald Reagan Building, Washington D.C.

"To ensure the goals and benefits are achieved, Customs and the trade community must continue to work together so that the redesigned Customs processes are consistent with the standard business environment."

Kevin Smith
General Motors
Trade Support Network Advisor

First 40 Accounts Selected

Customs recently selected 40 commercial accounts that will participate in the operational test* of the first capabilities of the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). This test will allow selected importers and authorized parties to offer suggestions for improvement on the capabilities of the web-based Account Portal that will be launched in early 2003. The 40 companies are comprised of the following industries: technology, automotive, mass merchandising, and pharmaceutical.

The first capability that ACE will deliver in February 2003 is account management. Currently account transactions are performed on a port-by-port, shipment-by-shipment process. ACE will enable Customs to adopt modern business practices for managing transactions and revenue. ACE will move account management to a consolidated system that tracks import and export activities in a single, comprehensive, account-based picture. Through the web portal, ACE will provide a complete nationwide view of all reported activity for trade accounts. As a result, shipments clearing Customs will be safer and more efficient than ever before.

One example of the type of account information available on the web portal is the activity log. It allows users to track all interactions (including compliance and action history) between Customs and the importer accounts in a single, national transaction record. This will provide a permanent audit trail for anyone in Customs, making coordination between import specialists, account managers, and importers easier and more productive. Customs trade records are too often captured only on paper. With ACE, Customs will be able to use electronic images of trade records, which will help speed the process of tracking errors.

The companies that applied to become participants in the operational testing were Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) certified. This means the company signed an agreement with Customs to tighten supply chain security. To become a member of C-TPAT, businesses must conduct a comprehensive self-assessment, submit a supply chain security profile questionnaire, and develop and implement a program to enhance security throughout the supply chain in accordance with C-TPAT guidelines.

Other companies will have opportunities in the future to participate as testing is expanded. Eventually all those involved in international trade (importers, brokers, carriers, shippers, etc.) will have access to ACE.

*Posted in the May 2002 Federal Register Notice.

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Customs Modernization:
New World, New Tools